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Planner filters freeway comments

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The next off-ramp for more than 100 comments and questions about the proposed South Mountain Freeway is the Arizona Department of Transportation.

But first, Ahwatukee Foothills village planner Chris Hood will separate comments into city-related issues and broader, statewide concerns.

That's the decision of the Ahwatukee Foothills Village Planning Committee, which solicited public comment over a three-month period in hopes of heading off problems should ADOT proceed with plans to build the freeway along Pecos Road.

The committee has twice voted to oppose the \$1.7 billion, 10-lane freeway through the community but wanted to solicit comments to build a case for why they think the project is wrong along Pecos Road.

"I can honestly say these replies showed so much passion about the freeway," said Hood, who grouped more than 160 comments and questions into nine categories.

Although not a statistically significant survey, respondents weighed in this way:

- 33 oppose the Pecos Road alignment.
- 15 favor the Pecos Road route.
- 23 want an alternative route.
- 23 worry about environmental impacts.
- 12 want to know about the affect on local street traffic.
- 10 worry about school, public transit, parks and other impacts.

Other categories, including emergency services responses and freeway design, generated similar comments.

The complete list of comments now will be sent to ADOT, while a subset of comments will go to various Phoenix departments to consider and, in some cases, answer.

Laurel Arndt, a member of the village planning committee and a member of ADOT's South Mountain Citizen's Advisory Team, complimented Hood on categorizing the

comments.

Arndt also said she was impressed by the creativity of the comments and suggestions.

"A good 20 percent of these comments offered solutions," she said. "I realize I do gripe, but I try to give solutions, too."

The committee decided to submit the comments as part of ADOT's draft environmental impact statement being sent to federal highway officials this month. Arndt, who plans to serve on the advisory team when it to meet again resumes meetings in the spring, said she would submit the comments to ADOT as part of her work on the committee.

As for Phoenix, Arndt said she also hopes the list would persuade the city to examine unforeseen impacts from the freeway.

"We're asking for the city to be proactive, not reactive," she said.

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